

# **Request for Economic Stimulus Funds**

## **Concept Proposal**

### **Submitters (Name of Workgroup & Chair/Co-Chairs):**

Submitted by Morehead State University to the CPE College Readiness Workgroup  
MSU College Readiness Team: Yvonne Baldwin, Cathy Gunn, Dayna Seelig

Note: This project could work very well in tandem, especially with the “Noesis” proposal, but with others as well.

### **Project Title:**

Literacy for Life: Kentucky’s New Moonlight Schools

### **Project Partners (Known or Anticipated):**

Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education  
Kentucky Department of Education  
The Collaborative Center for Literacy Development  
Regional Educational Cooperatives  
P-16 Councils  
MSU College of Education in collaboration with the Kentucky Association of Colleges of Teacher Education  
MSU’s Center for Regional Engagement\*  
All public and private postsecondary institutions  
All interested school superintendents, principals, and teachers  
All civic and volunteer organizations willing to partner to foster service learning and civic engagement  
National literacy associations, foundations, and groups

### **Project Background & Purpose (Justification for Project)**

The nation’s first state-funded literacy program was created by the Kentucky Legislature in 1914, and for the next 6 years, Kentucky led the nation in a crusade to eliminate illiteracy. Convinced to act by literacy pioneer Cora Wilson Stewart, the legislature and the state’s education leaders worked together to create Moonlight Schools in every county in the Commonwealth. Their goal was to teach every Kentuckian to read and write by 1920. Not only does 2020 mark the centennial of this milestone, the 20/20 goals for Kentucky and the goals of Senate Bill 1 provide a natural and inspirational link to this important part of Kentucky’s

history.<sup>1</sup> This historical link could provide the basis for an excellent and motivational public information campaign that could emphasize at every educational level the importance and centrality of reading for every stage of cognitive development. It could also promote the concept of civic literacy, civic engagement, and service learning during what is certain to be a pivotal era in our nation's history. The "New Moonlight Schools" could be created in local schools throughout the state, in colleges of education in every Kentucky college or university, and of course online.

Cora Wilson Stewart began her work in Rowan County in 1911, certain that literacy was the key to individual growth, social justice and progress, and economic development. She used the Moonlight Schools to promote the virtues of self improvement along with service to community and humankind. If parents valued learning, they would see to it that their children learned to read. If people learned to read and write, they could engage in gainful employment, act and react as informed citizens, and work in concert with their neighbors to improve life in their communities. Educators everywhere recognize the centrality of literacy to cognitive development. Without the ability to read, students struggle with every concept in every subject area. The goal of this program would be to promote literacy as a part of the holistic development of every Kentuckian, a necessary step if we are to increase the number of baccalaureate degree holders and especially critical if we are to reduce the number of students who come to college underprepared.

It is very appropriate that Morehead State University originate and coordinate this program. Since its founding, it has served as a "Light to the Mountains,"<sup>2</sup> and tens of thousands of students have come from the foothills and mountains, the river towns and the hillside farms of Eastern Kentucky and beyond to seek the means to a better life in this beautiful, forested valley. Our first president, Frank Button, and his widowed mother, Phebe, literally spent their lives bringing 'a light to the mountains' by founding a church-sponsored school to train teachers. Stewart and the

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<sup>1</sup> Yvonne Honeycutt Baldwin, *Cora Wilson Stewart and the Moonlight Schools: Fighting for Literacy in America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky) 1996, is the most current historical analysis on Stewart and her work. It focuses on the literacy movement from its origins as a local initiative through its growth to a national movement. The Moonlight School, one of the original one-room schools in Rowan County, has been moved to First Street in Morehead and is currently open to the public as a historic site: link <http://www.moreheadstate.edu/kfac/index.aspx?id=584> . The following link is to the extensive photographic archive on Stewart at the Kentucky Virtual Library: <http://kdl.kyvl.org/cgi/b/bib/bib-idx?type=simple;c=eadimages;q1=KUKAV-PA58M25-0440;rgn1=identifier;cc=eadimages;view=reslistlong;sort=A-Z;fmt=long;page=reslist>. All these resources could be combined with other information on the Moonlight schools, adult learning, and literacy skills development to make a compelling public information campaign.

<sup>2</sup> See Donald F. Flatt, *A Light to the Mountains: Morehead State University 1887-1997* (Ashland, KY: Jesse Stuart Foundation, 1997), 10-11.

Buttons were colleagues and friends who nurtured and supported each other throughout their careers and in their dedication to improve the region.

**Project Description (General Goals & Implementation Strategies):**

- The New Moonlight Schools would be implemented at all middle schools, junior high schools, high schools, colleges and universities in the state. They would focus on literacy as the means to mastery in all disciplines, including the STEM disciplines. Faculty at Kentucky universities would work with educational cooperatives, P-16 Councils, and other programs and partners to provide professional development through the establishment of New Moonlight Schools Literacy for Learning centers in each school district and at each college or university. All professional development programs and materials would be aligned with appropriate discipline strands of the Kentucky standards. A collateral function of this initiative could be to assist in the alignment of university general education curriculum and outcomes with the high school standards.
- Working collaboratively to address Senate Bill 1, and partnering with agencies and programs listed above, the goal would be to encourage and promote literacy as the basis for holistic cognitive growth; coordinate and implement incentivized reading and reading in the disciplines programs; promote service learning and civic engagement through strategically planned and supervised off-site activities and projects; focused professional development for pre- and in-service teachers; and coordinated academic courses for the new Teacher Leader MA programs.
- The organizing theme would be Kentucky's historical Moonlight Schools.
- The goal would be degree completion as a means of economic development, increased employment opportunities, and enhanced earning capacity. But it would also include an emphasis on the greater good that comes from higher education. This includes improved quality of life and positive effects on society and the common good.<sup>3</sup> It would include the placement of pre-service teachers and other volunteers as "life coaches" in the elementary, middle, high schools, and postsecondary institutions to assist in literacy development and help focus education and life goals in a way that emphasizes academic success and degree completion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/04/21/mcmahon> This link is to an *Inside Higher Education* article entitled "Higher Education, Greater Good," by Walter W. McMahon. He argues that focusing on the economic benefits overlooks the considerable value beyond earnings, for example, to better health, better child education and better child cognitive development, greater longevity, more efficient household purchasing, better management of assets, and many more non-market private benefits. He says focusing only on the market benefits is like having a three legged stool that has only one leg.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/04/16/vccs> This link is to an *Inside Higher Education* article entitled "College Counselors for All" that details a Virginia plan to help assure more students enter college.

- An important goal (and an outcome in and of itself) would be community involvement, civic engagement, and improved instructional infrastructure. The Moonlight School motto was “each one teach one,” hence the emphasis on service learning. This would be implemented through service learning projects in the local schools; instructional internships by pre-service teachers at local schools and in Developmental Education classes at their home institutions; and curricular emphasis in professional development and graduate level courses for pre- and in-service teachers.

A review of current and ongoing reading and literacy programs in the state (and nation as appropriate) would be necessary to determine feasibility and opportunities for collaboration, establish informational links for online navigation, and develop reading lists and literacy resources. The project would involve the creation of a statewide team to plan for phased delivery of website and programming, establish appropriate network and contracts for a statewide public information campaign, and develop and facilitate service learning, volunteers, and civic engagement links at the university, local, and school district level

**Project Team (Project Manager(s), Content Experts, Instructional Designers, etc.):**

To be developed from various networks of school, universities, and community.

**Project Budget and Amount of Stimulus Funds Requested:**

Initiative/Goal	Funding
Statewide professional development – 6 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers, including course tuition, materials, faculty incentives	\$2,500,000
Course development at universities and development of related resources and materials, internships for pre-service teachers	500,000
Statewide Public Information and Education campaign**	2,000,000
Establishment and coordination of local Moonlight Schools Literacy for Learning Centers	200,000
	\$5,200,000

*\* Following is a section from a recently funded CRE Gear Up Grant: “Compared to the national average almost **three times as many families** in our region **are living in poverty**. The median **income** for our region is roughly **half the national average**, while **unemployment rates are nearly double**.*

Further compounding those difficulties is the fact that **42% of adults in this region do not have a high school diploma**. ... parents simply do not have the financial or educational background to help their children prepare for postsecondary education. In addition, those who are trained to help these students plan their future and offer encouragement, the school counselors, are in desperate [straits] themselves. The American School Counselor Association recommends a guidance counselor/student ratio of **1:250**, yet in the schools we propose to serve the average counselor/student ratio is **1:500**.” Implementing this proposal could have a particularly profound impact on the 6 county service region included in this grant, but it could have an equally lasting impact statewide. The insertion of life coaches to assist the guidance counselors has been tested in some schools with good success.

\*\*This is an estimate only. A public information campaign seems essential if the goals are to be met, and that campaign must be timely and appealing so it is not overlooked or ignored.